

Message Text

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PAGE 01 VIENNA 06220 01 OF 02 011732Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 DHA-02 /060 W
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R 011624Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2381
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMCONSUL ZAGREB
CINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 VIENNA 6220

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, YU, AU
SUBJECT: SLOVENE MINORITY CONTROVERSY: MINORITIES LEGISLATION
BECAME EFFECTIVE JULY 1

REF: VIENNA 3247

1. BEING SUMMARY: MINORITIES LEGISLATION WENT INTO EFFECT
JULY 1 PROVIDING FOR ERECTION OF BILINGUAL ROAD SIGNS IN
CARINTHIA IN 8 MUNICIPAL DISTRICTS AND USE OF SLOVENE LANGUAGE
IN ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS IN 13 DISTRICTS. FIRST ROAD SIGNS
HAVE BEEN ERECTED AND OTHERS WILL FOLLOW IN NEXT FEW WEEKS.
PATRIOTIC FRONT, ORGANIZATION OF NATIONALIST ELEMENTS, HAS
REVERSED ITSELF AND CALLED ON MEMBERSHIP TO LEAVE SIGNS
STANDING AS SYMBOL OF SHAME AND BETRAYAL OF THREE POLITICAL
PARTIES IN CARINTHIA. BOTH SLOVENE MINORITY LEADERS AND GOY
HAVE STATED THAT GOA ACTION DOES NOT SATISFY REQUIREMENT
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PAGE 02 VIENNA 06220 01 OF 02 011732Z

OF ARTICLE 7 OF 1955 TREATY AND THAT THEY WILL CON-
TINUE TO REMIND GOA OF ITS OBLIGATIONS. GOA AND
CARINTHIAN AUTHORITIES HAVE SAID THAT WITH CURRENT
ACTION ON SIGNS AND USE OF SLOVENE LANGUAGE, AUSTRIA
HAS NOW FULLY IMPLEMENTED ART. 7 OF 1955 TREATY.
ERECTION OF FEW SIGNS MAY LESSEN POLITICAL TENSIONS IN
CARINTHIA BUT WILL NOT RESOLVE ISSUE, GIVEN CONTINUING

TOUGH CONFRONTATIONAL STANCES OF ALL PARTIES TO
CONTROVERSY. END SUMMARY.

2. CARINTHIAN GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITIES HAVE BEGUN
ERECTING BILINGUAL (GERMAN-SLOVENE) ROAD SIGNS IN
SOUTHERN CARINTHIA IN ACCORD WITH PROMOTION OF
MINORITIES LEGISLATION WHICH WENT INTO EFFECT JULY 1.
EIGHT MUNICIPAL DISTRICTS, LOCATED LARGELY IN BORDER
AREA SOUTH AND EAST OF KLAGENFURT, CAPITAL OF CARINTHIA,
AND ENCOMPASSING 91 VILLAGES AND HAMLETS, WILL GET NEW
ROAD SIGNS IN NEXT FEW WEEKS. AS PART OF SAME LEGIS-
LATIVE PACKAGE, USE OF SLOVENE LANGUAGE WILL NOW BE
POSSIBLE IN GOVERNMENTAL OFFICES IN 13 MUNICIPAL
DISTRICTS, IN COURT PROCEEDINGS BEFORE THREE COUNTY
COURTS AND IN MILITARY DRAFT MATTERS BEFORE MILITARY
COMMAND AT KLAGENFURT.

3. FOREGOING ACTION IS RESULT OF UNDERSTANDING WORKED
OUT IN EARLY MARCH BETWEEN GOA AND THREE MAJOR POLITI-
CAL PARTIES IN CARINTHIA AND HAS BEEN PRECEDED IN
RECENT WEEKS BY CONCERTED GOVERNMENTAL AND PARTY-
POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS TO GAIN ACCEPTANCE OF CARINTHIAN
POPULATION TO MOVE. SUCH CAMPAIGN WAS FELT NECESSARY
IN VIEW OF 1972 DEBACLE IN WHICH BILINGUAL ROAD SIGNS,
AFTER ERECTION, WERE TORN DOWN BY NATIONALIST EX-
TREMISTS AND IN WHICH CARINTHIAN SOCIALIST GOVERNOR,
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PAGE 03 VIENNA 06220 01 OF 02 011732Z

WHO HAD NOT PREPARED PUBLIC FOR ACCEPTANCE OF MOVE, WAS
DISOWNED BY OWN PARTY AND FORCED TO RESIGN.

4. IN CONTRAST TO ITS 1972 POSITION OF ENCOURAGING DES-
TRUCTION OF BILINGUAL ROAD SIGNS, PATRIOTIC FRONT
(HEIMATDIENST) IN CARINTHIA UNEXPECTEDLY SHIFTED TACTICS
EARLIER THIS WEEK AND CALLED UPON ITS APPROXIMATELY
60,000 MEMBERS TO ALLOW SIGNS TO STAND AS SYMBOL OF SHAME
AND BETRAYAL OF INTERESTS OF GERMAN-SPEAKING POPULATION BY
THREE POLITICAL PARTIES. IN SO DOING, PATRIOTIC FRONT RE-
ITERATED ITS POSITION THAT RESULTS OF NOVEMBER 1976
LANGUAGE CENSUS, WHICH WAS LARGELY BOYCOTTED BY SLOVENE-
SPEAKING POPULATION, DID NOT EVEN JUSTIFY ERECTION OF
BILINGUAL ROAD SIGNS IN 8 DISTRICTS. IN LEAFLETS DIS-
TRIBUTED IN CARINTHIA THIS WEEK, IT ALSO DENOUNCED SLOVENES
MINORITY LEADERS AS RADICALS, COMMUNISTS AND, BY IMPLI-
CATION, TOOLS OF YUGOSLAV INTERESTS.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 VIENNA 6220

5. SLOVENE MINORITY LEADERS NOT UNEXPECTEDLY CONTINUE TO CLAIM THAT LATEST GOA ACTION, INCLUDING ERECTION OF BILINGUAL ROAD SIGNS, DOES NOT IN THEIR VIEW SATISFY ARTICLE COMMITMENTS OF 1955 STATE TREATY. ARGUMENTS REMAIN UNCHANGED, NAMELY THAT ARTICLE 7 REQUIRES ERECTION OF BILINGUAL ROAD SIGNS IN AREAS OF MIXED POPULATION WITHOUT, HOWEVER, ANY PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION AS PRECONDITION, AND THAT SLOVENE MINORITY, OSTENSIBLY BENEFICIARY OF MINORITIES' LEGISLATION, WAS NOT CONSULTED IN FINAL PHASES OF ITS PREPARATION AND LEGISLATION WAS IN FACT ADOPTED OVER ITS OPPOSITION. IN ADDITION, SLOVENE MINORITY LEADERS STRESS FACT THAT UNDER 1972 DECISION ROAD SIGNS WERE TO BE ERECTED IN 36 DISTRICTS (NOW 8), ENCOMPASSING 205 VILLAGES (NOW 91), AND THAT ACCORDINGLY, INABILITY OF GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITIES TO ENFORCE THE LAW IN 1972 NOW RESULTS IN FURTHER DECLINE OF EFFECTIVE APPLICATION OF THEIR MINORITY RIGHTS. OTHER
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PAGE 02 VIENNA 06220 02 OF 02 011742Z

COMMENTARIES BY SLOVENE MINORITY LEADERS SUGGEST THAT NEXT COURSE OF ACTION WILL BE TO MOUNT CAMPAIGN WHICH WOULD INCLUDE CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE (REFUSAL OF INDUCTION NOTICES AND PAYMENT OF TAXES, FLOODING OF LOCAL OFFICES

WITH PETITIONS), BRINGING CASE BEFORE AUSTRIAN SUPREME COURT AND DIRECT APPEALS TO FOREIGN MEDIA AND GOVERNMENT LEADERS FOR THEIR SUPPORT.

6. FROM VIENNA PERSPECTIVE, GOY HAS ONCE AGAIN REGISTERED ITS STRONG OPPOSITION TO LEGISLATION ON PROMOTION OF MINORITIES AS FALLING FAR SHORT OF WHAT IT INTERPRETS TO BE AUSTRIA'S RESPONSIBILITIES VIS-A-VIS SLOVENE AND CROATIAN MINORITIES. YUGOSLAV AMBASSADOR TO AUSTRIA HAS CALLED ON APPROPRIATE SENIOR GOA OFFICIALS IN RECENT DAYS TO REITERATE YUGOSLAVIA'S UNYIELDING POSITION IN WHAT GOA FEELS TO BE LARGELY AN EXERCISE FOR THE RECORD.

7. GOA, FOR ITS PART, IS OF VIEWPOINT THAT DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND UPCOMING MAIN BELGRADE MEETING LATER THIS YEAR (REFTEL), REQUIRE SOME VISIBLE ACTION REGARDING ROAD SIGNS ISSUE AND THAT THIS REQUIREMENT IS NOW BEING MET. GOA AND CARINTHIAN GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITIES, IN CONTRAST TO 1972 DEBACLE, APPEAR DETERMINED TO UPHOLD THE LAW AND HAVE SAID THAT SIGNS, IF TORN DOWN, WILL BE RE-ERECTED, REPEATEDLY IF NECESSARY, UNTIL THEY ARE ALLOWED TO STAND UNDAMAGED. AT SAME TIME, GOA AND CARINTHIAN AUTHORITIES ARE SAYING THAT ACTION NOW UNDERWAY ON ROAD SIGNS AND LANGUAGE USE REPRESENTS FULL AND FINAL IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLE 7 AND NO FURTHER ACCOMMODATIONS SHOULD BE EXPECTED.

8. WHILE ALL PARTIES TO ISSUE REMAIN COMMITTED TO TOUGH
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PAGE 03 VIENNA 06220 02 OF 02 011742Z

IRRECONCILABLE PUBLIC STANCES, SHIFT IN TACTICS OF PATRIOTIC FRONT -- LEAVE SIGNS STANDING -- COULD PROVE TO BE KEY ELEMENT IN GAINING GRUDGING PUBLIC ACCEPTANCE OF SIGNS BY MORE RADICAL NATIONALIST ELEMENTS. ERECTION OF FEW ROAD SIGNS WILL NOT PER SE RESOLVE ISSUE BUT MAY, TOGETHER WITH VACATION SEASON, HELP TO REDUCE POLITICAL TENSIONS OVER ISSUE DURING SUMMER MONTHS IN SPITE OF CONTINUING CONFRONTATIONAL STANCES OF SLOVENE MINORITY LEADERS AND AUSTRIAN GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITIES. MEEHAN

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